

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6221

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 1403

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: THE SOCIALIST PARTY ELECTION STRATEGY

REF: LISBON 0143 (DTG 090645Z JAN 76)

SUMMARY: THE PS ELECTION GOAL IS TO WIN ENOUGH ASSEMBLY SEATS TO CONTROL THE NEXT GOVERNMENT; THE TARGET IS 40-PLUS PER CENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE. THE SOCIALIST STRATEGY IS TO PRESENT THE VOTER WITH A CLEAR "EITHER-OR" CHOICE -- EITHER A PS ADMINISTRATION DEDICATED TO REFORM AND CAPABLE OF GOVERNING, OR AN UNSTABLE COALITION OF THE RIGHT. TO ACCOMPLISH ITS GOAL, THE PS MUST:

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-- HOLD THE BULK OF ITS 1975 ELECTORATE.

-- MAKE INROADS INTO COMMUNIST SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY
IN THE ALENTEJO.

-- PICK UP SOME SUPPORT FROM THE PPD LEFT WING.

-- HOLD ITS OWN AMONG FIRST-TIME VOTERS: THE RETURNEES
AND YOUTH.

IN IMPLEMENTING ITS STRATEGY, THE PS WILL RELY HEAVILY
UPON THE MEDIA, ESPECIALLY TV AND RADIO, AND STRONG
MORAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE GOAL: THE PS GOAL IS TO WIN ENOUGH SEATS IN THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TO ENABLE THE SOCIALISTS TO CONTROL
THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. WHILE AIMING AT AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY
OF THE APPROXIMATELY 250 SEAT ASSEMBLY, THEY WILL CONSIDER
IT A VICTORY IF THEY PICK UP EVEN A FEW MORE SEATS THAN THE
116 THEY NOW HOLD. THE PS TARGET IS 40-PLUS PER CENT OF THE
POPULAR VOTE.

2. WHAT THE SOCIALISTS MUST DO: TO ACCOMPLISH ITS GOAL,
THE PS MUST:

-- HOLD THE BULK OF ITS 1975 ELECTORATE, DISCOURAGING ANY
DEFLECTIONS TO THE RIGHT;

-- MAKE GAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE COMMUNISTS ON THE LEFT;

-- PICK UP SOME SUPPORT FROM THE PPD LEFT WING TO HELP
BALANCE ANTICIPATED LOSSES TO BOTH THE PPD AND CDS AMONG
CONSERVATIVELY-INCLINED VOTERS WHO LAST YEAR VIEWED THE
SOCIALISTS AS THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS.

-- HOLD ITS OWN AMONG THOSE VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME,
OFFSETTING ANTICIPATED SUBPAR SUPPORT AMONG RETURNEES
FROM THE FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONIES, WITH STRONG BACKING
FROM YOUTH.

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3. THE PS STRATEGY: THE BASIC SOCIALIST STRATEGY IS TO
PRESENT THE VOTER WITH A CLEAR "EITHER-OR" CHOICE --
EITHER A SOCIALIST PARTY ADMINISTRATION DEDICATED TO
REFORM AND CAPABLE OF GOVERNING, OR AN UNSTABLE CDS-PPD-
PDC GOVERNMENT OF THE RIGHT. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE SPEC-
IFICALLY REJECTED ELECTION ALLIANCES WITH EITHER THE
POPULAR DEMOCRATS, TO THEIR RIGHT, OR THE COMMUNISTS, TO

THEIR LEFT. PARTY LEADERS CONTINUE TO STRESS THAT THE PS WILL GOVERN ALONE OR NOT AT ALL.

4. REGIONAL STRATEGY: THE PS STRATEGY IS HEAVILY CONDITIONED BY THE 1975 ELECTION RESULTS. ALTHOUGH THE PS RAN WELL IN ALMOST EVERY DISTRICT, THOSE RESULTS SHOWED THE SOCIALISTS TO BE STRONGEST IN THE METROPOLITAN AREAS OF LISBON AND OPORTO, AND IN THE CENTRAL REGION AND THE ALGARVE. THE PARTY WAS WEAKEST IN THE RURAL NORTH, THE ADJACENT ISLANDS, AND PARTS OF THE ALENTEJO. THE SOCIALIST STRATEGY IS GEARED TO PROTECTING AREAS OF STRENGTH WHILE ATTEMPTING TO CUT INTO OPPONENT'S SUPPORT.

A. IN URBAN AREAS: THIS IS WHERE THE BULK OF THE PS STRENGTH LIES. TO HOLD ITS PERCENTAGE IN THE CITIES, THE PS MUST:

-- REINFORCE ITS MODERATE, LEFT-CENTER IMAGE, ATTRACTING WORKING CLASS SUPPORT WITHOUT ALIENATING MIDDLE CLASS LIBERALS.

-- COUNTER POTENTIAL INROADS BY CLASSICAL LIBERAL APPEALS MADE BY CDS AND PPD TO NEW VOTERS AND THOSE MODERATES WHO VOTED THE SOCIALIST TICKET AS THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS. THE "EITHER-OR" CHOICE POSED BY THE SOCIALISTS IS AN ATTEMPT AGAIN TO ESTABLISH THE PS AS THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.

B. IN THE ALENTEJO: AN INCREASE IN THE PS PERCENTAGE IN THE ALENTEJO AT THE EXPENSE OF THE COMMUNISTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE OVERALL PS STRATEGY TO SUCCEED.

DOMINANT THEMES WILL BE:
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-- THE SOCIALISTS, NOT THE COMMUNISTS, ARE THE TRUE CHAMPIONS OF AGRARIAN REFORM.

-- THE SOCIALISTS HAVE THE ABILITY TO PUT AGRARIAN REFORM ACROSS; THE COMMUNISTS ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN USING THE RURAL WORKERS TO CAPTURE POWER.

C. IN THE RURAL NORTH: THE PS HAS CONCEDED THAT IT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THE STRONG CONSERVATIVE CURRENT RUNNING IN FAVOR OF THE PPD AND CDS IN THE RURAL NORTH. THE SOCIALISTS SEEK ONLY TO HOLD THEIR OWN IN THE HOPE THAT A RESURGENT CDS WILL CUT SUFFICIENTLY INTO THE PPD STRENGTH NOT TO AFFECT GREATLY THE RELATIVE PS POSITION. THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE PS

APPROACH INCLUDE:

-- COUNTERING CHARGES, LEVELED PRIMARILY BY THE STAUNCHLY-
CONSERVATIVE PORTUGUESE CONFEDERATION OF FARMERS (CAP),
THAT THE PS SEEKS TO "COLLECTIVIZE" SMALL AND MEDIUM
FARMERS.

-- STRESSING THAT THE PS HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE
CHURCH: THAT SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY ARE COMPATIBLE.

-- DEFLECTING RETURNEE CRITICISM, BY SUPPORTING PROGRAMS
TO BENEFIT THIS GROUP AND POINTING OUT THAT ALL MAJOR
PARTIES SUPPORTED THE GOP DECOLONIZATION POLICY.

D. IN THE ADJACENT ISLANDS: HERE TOO THE PS IS PREPARED
TO ACCEPT MINORITY STATUS. HERE TOO THE SOCIALISTS BANK
ON THE CDS CUTTING INTO THE PPD MARGIN. THE STRATEGY IN
THE ISLANDS IS DESIGNED TO GIVE THE CAMPAIGN THERE A
NATIONAL RATHER THAN AN EXCLUSIVELY REGIONAL FOCUS. THE
PS HAS COME OUT UNEQUIVOCALLY AGAINST INDEPENDENCE FOR
THE AZORES AND HAS CHALLENGED THE PPD AND CDS TO DO THE
SAME. THE IMAGE THE PS SEEKS TO PROJECT IS THAT OF A RESPONSIBLE
NATIONAL PARTY, WHICH REPRESENTS ALL THE PORTUGUESE, IN-
CLUDING THOSE ON THE ISLANDS.

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5. FUNCTIONAL STRATEGY: THE SOCIALISTS ARE ALSO FOLLOWING
A FUNCTIONAL STRATEGY WHICH CUTS ACROSS REGIONAL LINES.

A. LABOR: THE OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE INROADS INTO COMMUNIST
STRENGTH IN THE LISBON INDUSTRIAL BELT. THIS MUST BE
ACCOMPLISHED WHILE ENCOURAGING LABOR DISCIPLINE AND ACCEPTING
RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNPOPULAR POLICY DECISIONS BECAUSE OF PS
CONTROL OF KEY POSITIONS IN THE LABOR MINISTRY. BUT THE
SOCIALISTS ALSO HAVE IMPORTANT ASSETS. RECENT UNION ELECTION
VICTORIES HAVE GIVEN PS UNIONS THE MOMENTUM TO MOUNT A SERIOUS
CHALLENGE TO INTERSINDICAL. THROUGH ITS CONTROL OF THE KEY
ECONOMIC MINISTRIES OF GOVERNMENT, PRINCIPALLY THE FINANCE
MINISTRY, THE PS IS IN A POSITION TO TEMPER THE HARSH EFFECTS
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OF AUSTERITY AND TO HOLD THE INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING
WITHIN POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THE
PS MUST:

-- SHOW IT CAN HANDLE THE COMMUNISTS, AND CONTINUE TO BEAT
THEM AT THE RANK-AND-FILE LEVEL;

-- PRESENT A CREDIBLE DEFENSE OF THE "REVOLUTIONARY GAINS"
WON BY UNIONS UNDER THE PCP-DOMINATED VASCO GONCALVES GOVERNMENT.

B. THE ECONOMY: THE OBJECTIVE IS TWOFOLD:

(1) TO CUT POTENTIAL LOSSES AS A RESULT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND
SLOW ECONOMIC RECOVERY; AND (2) TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF
RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP, THEREBY REINFORCING THE THEME THAT
ONLY THE SOCIALISTS ARE CAPABLE OF MANAGING THE COUNTRY.
THE PS WILL THEREFORE SEEK TO:

-- ENCOURAGE THE VIEW THAT RECOVERY IS ALREADY UNDERWAY.

-- TEMPER THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC AUSTERITY UNTIL
AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

-- SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE PS TO THE ENTIRE SIXTH
GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS AS WELL AS THE POPULAR

DEMOCRATS.

-- PROJECT AN IMAGE OF MATURITY AND RESPONSIBILITY, A CAPACITY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS, AND AN ABILITY TO PUT THE COUNTRY BACK TO WORK.

-- CONVINCE VOTERS THAT THE PS, BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS, IS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO OVERSEE THE TASKS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

C. AGRICULTURE: AGAIN THE OBJECTIVE IS TWOFOLD: (1) TO CUT INTO COMMUNIST STRENGTH IN THE ALENTEJO; AND (2) TO COUNTER CHARGES, ESPECIALLY IN THE RURAL NORTH, THAT THE PS FAVORS COLLECTIVIZATION AND IS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMER. THE PS MUST DEFEND ITSELF ON BOTH FLANKS -- ON THE LEFT FROM THE COMMUNISTS, AND ON THE RIGHT FROM MILITANT
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FARMERS MOBILIZED BY CAP. IN PART FROM CONVICTION, IN PART FROM POLITICAL NECESSITY, THE PARTY HAS AGGRESSIVELY DEFENDED THE POLICIES OF SOCIALIST AGRICULTURE MINISTER LOPES CARDOSO, THE LEADER OF THE PARTY'S LEFT WING. LOPES CARDOSO HAS SOUGHT TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE FROM HIS CRITICS WITH FORAYS INTO THE RURAL NORTH AND THE ALENTEJO. HIS MESSAGE: THE PS IS COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENT AGRARIAN REFORM BUT EQUALLY DETERMINED TO CORRECT ABUSES; AGRARIAN REFORM IS NO THREAT TO SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMERS.

D. OTHER SECTORS: THE SOCIALISTS ARE ALSO CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO TAILOR THEIR CAMPAIGN TO APPEAL TO OTHER GROUPS, PARTICULARLY WOMEN AND YOUTH.

-- YOUTH: THROUGH SOCIALIST YOUTH (JS), THE PS HAS FORMALLY RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH AND GIVEN IT AN INSTITUTIONALIZED ROLE IN PARTY COUNCILS. TWENTY OF THE 151 SEATS ON THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ARE RESERVED FOR JS MEMBERS. THE PRESIDENT OF JS IS A MEMBER OF THE 14-MEMBER NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. RECENT REPORTS OF ALLEGED DISSENTION WITHIN THE JS ORGANIZATION AND OCCASIONAL FLIRTATIONS WITH COMMUNIST YOUTH FRONTS, HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED. THE YOUTH WING CONTINUES TO BE A STRONG ELECTION ASSET.

-- WOMEN: THE PS HAS NOT BROUGHT MANY WOMEN INTO THE TOP RANKS OF PARTY LEADERSHIP. ALTHOUGH THE WIVES OF A NUMBER OF TOP PARTY LEADERS, INCLUDING MARIO SOARES AND LOPES CARDOSO, HAVE ACHIEVED PROMINANCE WITHIN THE PARTY, THEY TEND STILL TO BE THE EXCEPTION. THE 1975 ELECTION RESULTS SHOWED A TENDENCY FOR THE CDS AND PPD VOTE TO INCREASE IN THOSE DISTRICTS WITH A RELATIVELY LARGER PROPORTION OF WOMEN VOTERS. CONVERSELY, THE PCP AND PS VOTE TENDED TO INCREASE AS THE NUMBER OF WOMEN

IN THE ELECTORATE DECLINED. THE CDS BENEFITED RELATIVELY THE MOST FROM THE "FEMALE VOTE" AND THE PCP RECEIVED LEAST SUPPORT. THE PS IS AWARE IT HAS A PROBLEM, BUT IS ONLY BELATEDLY MOVING TO ATTRACT MORE WOMEN VOTERS.

6. CARRYING OUT THE STRATEGY: KEY ELEMENTS IN THE PS EFFORT INCLUDE:

-- RADIO AND TV: THE SOCIALISTS HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE
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IN THE USE OF TV AND RADIO. THE 1975 ELECTION RESULTS SHOW A HIGH POSITIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN ACCESS TO TV AND RADIO AND THE PS VOTE. BECAUSE OF THEIR POSITIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, PS LEADERS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO TV AND RADIO DESPITE RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF THE MEDIA FOR CAMPAIGN PURPOSES DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD. FINANCE MINISTER SALGADO ZENHA HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE IN THIS REGARD.

-- RALLIES: THE SOCIALISTS ARE EXPERTS IN THE POLITICAL USE OF RALLIES AND MASS MEETINGS. THEY WILL CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS IN URBAN CENTERS AND KEY "TRANSITION AREAS" WHERE THEY BELIEVE THE OUTCOME IS IN DOUBT.

-- PRESS: THROUGH ITS CONTROL OF "DIARIO DE NOTICIAS" AND "A LUTA," THE TWO LISBON DAILIES WITH THE LARGEST MORNING AND AFTERNOON CIRCULATION RESPECTIVELY, THE SOCIALISTS WILL HAVE A DECIDED EDGE OVER THEIR RIVALS.

-- HELP FROM ABROAD: THE SOCIALISTS EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO DRAW UPON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY AS THEY DID WITH EXCELLENT RESULTS DURING THE 1975 CAMPAIGN. MORE SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, WILL BE THE SUPPORT -- BOTH MORAL AND FINANCIAL -- WHICH THE PS EXPECTS TO GET FROM FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL. THE PLANNED MEETING OF EUROPEAN SOCIALIST LEADERS IN OPORTO MARCH 14 WILL UNDERSCORE THIS SUPPORT AND WILL GIVE THE PS CAMPAIGN A MAJOR BOOST.
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